THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) It is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments concerned to provide relief to the people affected by natural calamities from their annual allocation under Calamity Relief Fund. In addition, the Government of India provides additional assistance from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR), in the event of calamities of rare severity.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has reported total suicidal deaths as 236. During 1997-98, an additional assistance of Rs. 12.00 crorc was released to the state Government from the NFCR in the wake of damage to crops, mainly cotton, due to pest attack. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has sanctioned ex-gratia of Rs. 1.00 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased and has also announced several package measures of relief to the affected farming families including steps to assist the farmers who are facing debt trap due to damage to crops.

Fall in Cotton Production

133. SHRI N.R. DASARI:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether it is a fact that India's cotton production during the current season is likely to be lower than that of the last season;

(b)if so, what was the production of cotton in the 1995-96, 1996-97 seasons and the estimation for 1997-98 season; and

(c)what: will be the estimated shortage and how it is proposed to be met?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The production of cotton in the country for the years 1995-96 and 1996-97 was 12.86 and 14.25 million bales of 170 Kgs each. The likely production of cotton for 1997-98 is 11.42 Million Bales.

(c) The expected fall in production of cotton in 1997-98 as compared to 1996-97 is 2.83 million bales, but the carry forward opening stock of cotton for cotton year 1997-98 is 3.04 million bales. The import of cotton is under Open General Licence with zero import duty.

CAG Audit into the Affairs of NDDB

134. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether it is a fact that his Ministry had objected to an audit by CAG into the affairs of the multi-million National Dairy Development Board (NDDB); and

(b)whether the matter has since been decided and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) On the request of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying had granted approval for the audit of accounts of the National Dairy Development Board(NDDB) by the CAG under Sub-section (2) of Section 14 of the Comptroller and Auditor Generals (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971. The NDDB then brought up before the Government the question of applicability of Section 14 of the CAGs (DPC) Act, 1971 *vis-a-vis* Section 15 of the Act. The Government therefore referred the matter for the opinion of a senior legal counsel.

(b) The matter has not been finally decided.

Reports on Assistance to West Bengal from National Calamity Fund

135. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether all reports have been received from Government of West Bengal for grant of assistance from the National Calamity Fund and the Fund for Natural Calamity;